

DECISION RECORD AND  
FINDING OF NO SIGNIFICANT IMPACT  
EA-NM-060-02-0017  
NM 105295

Recommendation: I recommend that the proposed action by Yates Petroleum Corporation for construction of a buried natural gas pipeline be approved as mitigated, for 30 years, subject to the terms and conditions in 43 CFR 28.00; rental payments as determined by 43 CFR 2803.1-2; and the attached standard stipulations for buried pipelines. This action will affect the following public lands:

New Mexico Principal Meridian

T. 5 S., R. 24 E., N.M.P.M.  
Section 26: SE1/4SW1/4;  
Section 35: NW1/4NE1/4, NE/4NW1/4.

Authority of this action is the Mineral Leasing Act of February 25, 1920; 30 USC 185.

Rationale for recommendation: The proposed action would not result in any undue or unnecessary environmental degradation. Portions of the subject lands and adjacent lands have been used for similar purposes and all present and potential uses and users have been considered.

Prepared by:

/s/ Irene Gonzales-Salas  
Realty Specialist

11/27/01  
Date

Decision:      The recommendation and rationale are adopted as my decision.

Finding of No Significant Impact: The impact of the proposed action and alternatives to minority or low-income populations or communities has been considered and no significant impact is anticipated. Based on the analysis of potential environmental impacts contained in the attached environmental assessment, I have determined that impacts are not expected to be significant and an environmental impact statement is not required.

Compliance and Monitoring: The construction phase of this proposed action and subsequent operational phases will be monitored as per regulation.

/s/ Armando Lopez  
for Larry D. Bray  
Assistant Field Manager  
Roswell Field Office

11/27/01  
Date

BUREAU OF LAND MANAGEMENT  
ROSWELL FIELD OFFICE  
ROSWELL, NM 88201

ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT  
EA# NM-060-02-0017  
Right-of-Way NM 105295

Applicant: YATES PETROLEUM CORP.  
105 South Fourth Street  
Artesia, NM 88210

Location: T. 5 S., R. 24 E., N.M.P.M.  
Section 26: SE1/4SW1/4;  
Section 35: NW1/4NE1/4, NE/4NW1/4.

Preparer: Irene Gonzales-Salas November 19, 2001

I. INTRODUCTION

A. Need for the Proposed Action

The proposed action is needed to develop the mineral lease and transport natural gas to market.

B. Conformance with Land Use Plan

The purposed action is in conformance with the approved Roswell Resource Management Plan (RMP), and is consistent with Bureau policy and guidance.

C. Relationship to Statutes, Regulations, or Other Plans

The proposed action does not conflict with any known State or Local planning or zoning ordinance. The authority for this action is the Mineral Leasing Act of 1920, as Amended.

II. BACKGROUND, PROPOSED ACTION AND ALTERNATIVES

A. BACKGROUND/PROPOSED ACTION

On October 25, 2001, Yates Petroleum Corporation (YPC) submitted a completed application for a buried pipeline right-of-way.

YPC proposes to construct, operate and maintain a buried 2-inch X42 steel gas pipeline. Total proposed pipeline length would be approximately 1,600 feet, all of which is located on public land. The proposed natural gas pipeline would connect the GYP MO Fed. Com No. 2 well, located in the NW1/4NE1/4 of Section 35, Township 5 South, Range 24 East to a tie-in point in the SE1/4SW1/4 of Section 26, Township 5 South, Range 25 East. Maximum operating pressure of the pipeline line would be 300 psi.

Related appurtenance would consists of a pipeline meter station, underground gates, block valves and related appurtenances.

A width of 50 feet is requested for the right-of-way to get equipment down the right-of-way. The proposed pipeline will be buried approximately 36 inches. Thirty feet of the ROW will be bladed, a ditcher will trench approximately 48 inches deep to allow for 3 feet of cover. The proposed

pipeline would be constructed in accordance with the Standard Stipulations for Buried Pipelines in the Roswell Field Office, BLM.

The location of the proposed action is in Chaves County, New Mexico. The legal land description is:

T. 5 S., R. 24 E., N.M.P.M.  
Section 26: SE1/4SW1/4;  
Section 35: NW1/4NE1/4, NE/4NW1/4.

A right-of-way 50 feet wide by 1,600 feet long yields 1.837 acres (0.303 of a mile).

C. Alternatives

1. No Action

Under this alternative the application would be rejected.

2. Change the Alignment-Reroute the Project

The proposed buried pipeline would be confined to existing rights-of-way, minimizing width requirements and maximizing multiple occupancy as directed in the proposed RMP. There are no alternate routes which would have significantly less environmental impacts or any clear advantages over the proposed action. Therefore, the alternative of changing the location of the project is not analyzed further.

III. AFFECTED ENVIRONMENT

General Setting. The proposed pipeline is located approximately 25 miles northeast of Roswell. Legal access is provided by heading North out of Roswell on U. S. 285 for approximately 22 miles to Cottonwood and Roosevelt Road. Turn Left on Roosevelt and go approximately 3.2 miles to intersection of Pipeline Road and Roosevelt Road (sign only shows Roosevelt). Turn left on Pipeline Road (NW) and go approximately 3.3 miles and turn right on lease road drive approximately 400 feet. The well location is parallel to the road about 200 feet on the east side of the road. The pipeline begins on the GYP Mo Federal Com. No. 2 Well Location.

Both the surface and mineral estates are in public ownership. An inspection of the Master Title Plats revealed the following title information.

Oil and Gas Lease - NM 11592 currently leased to Yates Petroleum Corporation.

Pipeline Rights-of-Way NM 29081, NM 53801, NM 16556, NM 36230.

Buried telephone cable right-of-way NM 65872.

There are no mining claims recorded.

The regional industries are ranching, oil and gas development and seasonal hunting.

Affected Resources. The following critical elements have been evaluated and are either not present or are not affected by the proposed action or the alternatives in this EA:

Air Quality  
Areas of Critical Environmental Concern (ACECs)  
Cultural/Archaeological Resources (02-R-002-A)

Farm Lands (Prime and Unique)  
Floodplains  
Native American Religious Concerns  
Threatened or Endangered (T&E) Species (plants & animal)  
Wastes, Hazardous and/or Solid  
Water Quality, Drinking and Ground  
Wetlands and Riparian Zones  
Wild and Scenic Rivers  
Wilderness

The impact of the proposed action and alternatives to minority or low-income populations or communities has been considered and no significant impact is anticipated.

A. Soils

This soil group is described calcareous, gypsiferous alluvium and residuum material. The soils are on knolls, ridges, alluvial side slopes, and depressional areas, referred to as Hollomex, moist-Milner-Reeves, moist loams, moderately undulating as described in the Soil Survey of Chaves County, New Mexico-Northern Part (pages 39 & 40 and map No. 12).

The Hollomex soil is moderate, runoff is medium, and the hazard of water erosion is moderate.

The Milner soil is deep and well drained. Permeability of the Milner soil is moderate, runoff is slow to medium, and the hazard of water erosion is slight to medium.

Permeability of the Reeves soil is moderate, runoff is medium, and the hazard of water erosion is moderate. The hazard of soil blowing is high. The soils are found on 0 to 8 percent slopes.

B. Vegetation

The native vegetation in the area is composed of mainly grasses, shrubs, and forbs, such as black grama, gyp grama, gyp muhly, coldenia, blue grama, tobosa, and sand dropseed. There are no known populations of noxious or invasive weed species at the proposed site.

C. Range

The proposed project is located within the following grazing allotment: Allotment 64045 HCR 31 Box 1141 Roswell, NM 88201

D. Wildlife

Wildlife species utilizing this area for habitat include mule deer, pronghorn antelope, coyote, fox, rabbits, kangaroo rats, pocket gophers, prairie rattlesnakes, as well as a variety of songbirds, dove, quail, and raptors.

No known special status species (plant or animal) or critical habitat occur within the project area or would be affected by the proposed action.

E. VRM/Recreation/Karst

The subject lands are within a Class IV VRM area. In a VRM Class IV area, contrast caused by a management activity may attract attention and be a dominant feature of the landscape. The proposed project is located in an area where numerous oil and gas activities are ongoing.

Recreational use is varied from severely limited to nonexistent. The small amount of recreational use in the proposed project area primarily involves seasonal hunting activities. Animals hunted include mule deer, pronghorn antelope, dove, quail, coyote and rabbit.

No surface cave/karst features were observed in the immediate vicinity of the proposed actions. However, the proposed action is located in a medium karst potential area.

#### IV. Environmental Impacts

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##### Impacts of the Proposed Action.

Impacts from the proposed action are minimal and short-term in nature. Temporary disruption and soil and rock movement would occur primarily during construction activities. Removal of vegetation along the right-of-way would take place. Some soil loss will occur from soil blowing winds, as a natural result from the stripping of vegetation and exposing of the soils during construction. Less than 1 acre of vegetation would be depleted for 2 or 3 growing seasons. A reduction in AUMs would not occur.

Noxious weeds affect both crops and native plant species in the same way by out-competing for light, water, and soil nutrients. Noxious weeds cause estimated crop losses of \$2 to \$3 billion annually. These losses are attributed to: (1) Decreased quality of agricultural products due to high levels of competition from noxious weeds; and (2) decreased quantity of agricultural products due to noxious weed infestations.

Further, noxious weeds can negatively affect livestock and dairy producers by making forage unpalatable to livestock, thus decreasing livestock productivity and potentially increasing producers, feed costs. Increased cost to producers are eventually borne by consumers.

Infestations of noxious weeds can have a potentially disastrous impact on biodiversity and natural ecosystems. In order to combat the negative effects of noxious weeds on crop lands, grazing lands and waterways, herbicidal and other weed control strategies can be implemented at further costs to producers and government agencies. Such costs would then likely be passed down to consumers, who would pay more for products due to increased producer costs.

Impacts from the proposed construction activity would affect grounddwelling species, but there is sufficient habitat in the area to minimize the impact. More mobile species such as small mammals and birds would temporarily leave the site during actual construction activities and should return in a short period of time.

Visual resources would not be significantly affected.

Recreational use is varied from severely limited to nonexistent. The small amount of recreational use in the proposed project area primarily involves seasonal hunting activities. Animals hunted include mule deer, pronghorn antelope, dove, quail, coyote and rabbit. The proposed right-of-way will have minimal impacts on the current recreational uses of the area.

Karst is not present in the immediate area of the proposed action.

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##### Impacts of Alternatives

Alternative 1. No Action: The "No Action" alternative denies the application. This alternative would result in no environmental impacts; however, there would be adverse economic impacts to the applicant. There have been no significant or unmitigatable impacts identified which would warrant selection of this alternative.

##### Mitigating Measures

The total right-of-way width will be kept to a maximum width of 30 feet.

The applicant will construct the pipeline in accordance with the Roswell Field office Standard Stipulations for Buried Pipelines, therefore no additional mitigation will be required.

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#### Residual Impacts

The direct effects of the proposed action include soil and vegetation disruption and further fragmentation of wildlife habitat. Indirect effects include the possibility of poor revegetation, resulting in soil erosion. Also, a slight possibility of pipeline rupture will exist for the life of the proposed action, which could result in negative localized impacts to air, water, soil and vegetation, wildlife and livestock.

Past industrial activities in the Pecos valley include dispersed oil and gas development and cattle grazing, trends which have continued to the present. These surface disturbing activities have collectively altered resources such as air quality, vegetation, soil, water and wildlife. These trends will continue into the foreseeable future, with some modifications, causing similar impacts.

The proposed action is located in an area with sufficient quantities of natural gas to assume near maximum development - one well per 320 acres (or 160 acres), each with access road, pad and pipeline - which would involve similar surface impacts. While the effects of this individual proposed action will likely be minimal, the potential exists for negative cumulative impacts to any or all of the affected resources by the combination of past, present and expected future land uses.

#### V. Consultation and Coordination

The comments and suggestions expressed during the consultation have been incorporated into this EA.